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AUTHOR McCollum, Sylvia G.
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ABSTRACT

The challenge confronting creative educators concerned with using the correctional experience in positive ways is to structure an educational delivery system which takes into account the wide range of individual differences among people whose only common denominator is "serving time." Inherent is the problem of staff and public resistance to "rewarding" law breakers with genuine educational improvement opportunities. Delivery systems which might replace traditional approaches, sometimes at no greater cost, are: (1) educational voucher systems--prisoners fulfilling certain requirements would be guaranteed bona fide educational opportunities, outside the constraints of the prison environment, (2) prison as a specialized learning center--each prison would specialize in a single occupational cluster, with prisoners assigned by education and training requirements, (3) educational technology centers in prisons--offering a wider course range and permitting greater flexibility in scheduling, (4) establishment of correctional school districts--making available budget, staff, and materials normally provided to an operating school district, (5) educational diagnostic and referral centers--residential correctional facilities in which security is not the first priority, and (6) use of community colleges--facilitators in the delivery of services necessary to divert the first offender from commitment to a correctional institution. (Author/AJ)

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BY SYLVIA G. McCOLLUM
Education Research Specialist, Federal Bureau of Prisons

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New Designs for Correctional Education and Training Programs

BY SYLVIA G. McCOLLUM
Education Research Specialist, Federal Bureau of Prisons

CORRECTIONAL education and training has the special mission of upgrading the capacity of people found at varying points in the criminal justice system to cope more effectively (i.e., in legal and socially acceptable ways) with life's economic and social requirements. Some practitioners in the corrections field define this mission very narrowly; to them, education and training means primarily achievement of a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate and the acquisition of entry level job skills. Others increasingly define correctional education more broadly. This richer definition includes not only academic and career education, but also instruction in skills which stimulate and facilitate involvement in social, economic, and cultural pursuits and the ability to seek entry into and to take advantage of available opportunity systems.[1]

The average daily population of offenders in institutions is estimated at approximately 400,000. Of these, around 150,000 are "detained" or serve sentences of such short duration that they cannot be educationally programmed. As a result, the potential daily student population in correctional institutions is estimated at about 250,000. Approximately 15 percent are youthful offenders (under age 18) and roughly 5 percent are females.

Characteristically, the student/prisoner comes from an economically and socially deprived background, lacks any stable work history, is a school pushout/dropout and has come in conflict with the law at an early age. He tends to be isolated from groups and organizations as well as from the kinds of situations and experiences which contribute to learning and maturation processes. The average prisoner's education and training needs are characteristically substantial and by any reasonable standards require intensive and diversified programming.

Despite these urgent needs, very few correctional institutions offer bona fide education and training programs. Most of the 4,000 county and local jails in the United States offer no programs at all. Some state institutions provide the opportunity to take high school equivalency and limited vocational training courses. Other state prisons and many Federal correctional institutions offer a wider range of educational opportunities. These broader programs include literacy education, instruction leading to a high school diploma or the GED, college level courses, varied skill training and job readiness programs as well as occupational counseling and related social education programs. In recent years structured leisure time and recreational programs and special cultural courses (Black studies, American Indian, Spanish American cultures, etc.) have been introduced. Drama, creative writing, the study of music and art and related arts and crafts programs are still the exception rather than the rule.

The Fatal Flaw

The fatal flaw in all correctional education programs stems from the assumption that people who happen to share a common address—a prison—share educational aptitudes, interests, and needs which can be served by programs which are limited to high school equivalency courses, skill training in four or five vocational areas and a few college level courses.[2] The age range of inmates in many state prisons and in some Federal correctional institutions can be from 15 to 50 years or older. Interests and aptitudes, past educational experiences and achievement levels cover a broad range and have brought each prisoner to an individual educational readiness which cannot reasonably be served by such narrow programming.

In addition, most correctional education and

[1] Many correctional educators, like their counterparts in public schools everywhere, make arbitrary and unnatural distinctions between "academic" and "vocational" or "occupational" education. They operate under the false assumption that "academic" education is not job training despite impressive research data which establish that a high school diploma and a college degree impressively enhance lifetime occupational earning power.

[2] Welding, food service, automotive maintenance and repair, and building construction trades are generally the vocational education offerings for men. A few institutions offer training as a computer programmer, dental technician, and draftsman. Women's institutions characteristically offer home economics and cosmetology training. Discrimination even follows women into prison; data processing and related key punch training is sometimes offered women prisoners. Computer programmer training is reserved for men. As far as we have been able to determine, computer programmer training is not offered women prisoners inside correctional institutions anywhere in the United States.

training programs imitate the worst of the public school models; the conventional classroom with students seated in orderly rows and the teacher safely isolated from the students by a large desk behind which he sits or stands most of the 50-minute classroom hour are the rule in prison schools. Characteristically, instructors are white English-speaking men (except in women's prisons where teachers are generally women), and anyone who cannot read or write in the instructor's language, regardless of the person's literacy in any other language (Spanish for example), is regarded and programmed as an illiterate.

Vocational education programs are primarily in manual skill areas and are seldom, if ever, integrated with related academic courses. Math is math and learning to measure in a carpentry class is something else again.

In some institutions, primarily those serving youth and young adults, classes are held during daylight "prime time" hours staffed by full-time, certified teachers; and in others, primarily adult institutions, classes are held during evening hours and staffed by part-time teachers who "moonlight" after a full day's teaching in a nearby public school. It is not uncommon to find a retired military or public school educator starting a second career teaching in a correctional institution. Many classrooms are makeshift, poorly lighted, inadequately ventilated, and drably furnished. In some, there is even a shortage of paper and pencils. There are, of course, outstanding exceptions to these general conditions, but we need to consider prevailing program levels rather than the exceptions. In view of these conditions "students" are predictably reluctant to enroll in prison schools despite the very real motivator of parole board interest in educational attainment as a factor to be considered at the time of parole review.

This negative overall picture persists despite continuing evaluations which urge that we regard correctional education and training as a priority area of concern.[3] It is also significant that inadequate education and training programs are increasingly being listed among the grievances for which prisoners' organizations are seeking redress.[4] Is not this sort of an educator's dream: students protesting that they want more and better education and training?

There needs to be a continuing and accelerating awareness among correctional administrators and educators that traditional methods are not working in prison education programs any more than they are in the "free world." Followup studies of prison education and training programs such as those reported by Abt Associates (1969), Spencer, et al. (1971), and Dickover, et al. (1971) reveal that postrelease jobs of prisoners are generally not related to training received in prison. In addition, Pownall (1969), Sullivan (1967) and others report that job loss after release from prison is generally not due to lack of specific skills but is due to other deficiencies such as poor attendance, hostile attitudes, overreaction to supervision and other nonjob content related issues.

On the other hand, Pownall (1969), McCabe and Driscoll (1971), and continuing reports from the Rehabilitation Research Foundation indicate that there is a positive relationship between a person's involvement in education and training programs while in prison, postrelease employment in some job, and "success" in staying out of prison.

The Need for New Delivery Systems

The challenge confronting creative educators concerned with using the correctional experience in positive ways is to structure an educational delivery system which takes into account the wide range of individual differences in age, levels of prior experience, aptitudes, interests, and learning styles of a group of people whose only common denominator is "serving time." Inherent in this challenge, also, is the problem of staff and public resistance to "rewarding" law breakers with genuine educational improvement opportunities, particularly if the education and training is purposefully designed to lead to job opportunities which pay as well or better than those held by the involved correctional staff.

Despite these many impediments, the time may be right to make significant changes in correctional education systems. Certainly the public is sensitive to the whole issue of prison reform. Prisoners themselves, either as individuals or in organizations, religious groups, community organizations, professional groups such as the American Bar Association and, of course, correctional administrators and line staff are also keenly aware of the troubled situation and seem ready to

[3] The most recent official report (only one of many) to make this recommendation is the Report of the President's Task Force on Prisoner Rehabilitation, "The Criminal Offender—What Should Be Done?" Washington, D.C., April 1970.

[4] See for example "The Folsom Prisoner's Manifesto of Demands" and "Anti-Oppression Platform" as reported in *If They Come in the Morning*, Angela Y. Davis, New York, Joseph Okpaku Publishing Company, Inc., 1971.

talk about and accept significant changes. Ryan (1971) reports that 145 correctional staff members who participated in a series of inservice training programs during 1971 developed 66 different and innovative correctional education delivery systems, tailor made to the specific conditions of their respective institutions, including special allowances for specific inmate profile data and institutional and community restraints.

Traditional approaches can be replaced, sometimes at no greater cost. Certainly the state of the art of education and training is such that we can structure models which have been found to offer hope with other groups of students who share some of the characteristics of prison populations. Educational decision makers, both in and outside corrections, can profit from a careful examination of new designs which may prove particularly effective, not only with students found at varying places in the criminal justice system, but with their counterparts outside the walls.

Educational Voucher Systems

Many people seriously doubt whether it is possible to mount effective education and training programs within the constraints of prison environments. The primary purpose of all prisons is to physically restrain a person against his will. Very few prisoners would voluntarily remain in prison. Involuntary residence requires certain types of architecture, staffing patterns, rules and regulations, living arrangements, and deliberate withholding from community-based opportunities. In addition, in a prison environment infractions of rules frequently result in disciplinary measures and physical separation from the main prison community which prevent sustained program participation regardless of consequences. Where program participation and the security of the institution come in conflict, almost without exception, security is the priority concern.

In addition, the historically low salaries, the exclusion of minority group members, and the geographic and social isolation of prison communities have resulted in correctional staff characteristics which are not always amenable to promoting education and training efforts. Long sentences, the practice of using prisoner labor to maintain the institution, "license plate variety" prison industries, and the antieducation prisoner subculture all take their toll. Add to all of this the fact that approximately five of every 10 prison employees are guards and it is not difficult to understand why some people conclude it is sheer sophistry to talk about providing meaningful education and training services in a prison environment.

One obvious alternative is to take correctional education out of the institution and separate it sequentially from the confinement period.

It may be possible to structure a system within which prisoners would be provided with individual educational vouchers, guaranteeing them access to educational services upon completion of specified time periods and upon meeting specified standards of conduct. This might mean that the individual prisoner would be involved in institutional maintenance work, prison industries, or some other appropriate range of activities for a specified portion of his sentence. He would then become entitled to full-time involvement in a carefully prescribed education and training program either at a nearby manpower skill center, a vocational-technical school, junior college, or other appropriate educational experience. A community-based approved apprenticeship program, a job which includes training, or some other approved work-study arrangement might also serve to meet individual needs. The educational commitment to particular prisoners might mean transfer to another correctional facility closer to the training opportunity. The details of individual arrangements would be less difficult to work out than acceptance of the basic concept, namely that fulfillment of certain requirements would bring with it entitlement to bona fide educational opportunities. Leiberg, et al. (1972) suggest that these educational vouchers could be in legally enforceable contract form, recognized by paroling authorities and the courts.

Some people react to this concept by insisting that it is very unrealistic; that since many "good people" who have never broken the law do not have corresponding opportunities, this idea can never really gain recognition and acceptance. This particular model they argue may have to await broader availability of education and training services to the population at large. Notwithstanding the merits of these arguments, the U.S. Department of Labor is in the process of funding experimental demonstration research projects to test the feasibility of using the educational voucher system for a selected number of prisoners.

Cost effective considerations are pushing the educational voucher idea faster than might otherwise be the case. It already costs more per year

to keep a man in prison than it would cost to provide him with realistic education and training opportunities. The $3,000 per year it costs to keep a person locked up could buy first-class education and training services. In addition, we know that prison experience almost guarantees recidivism. We meet the young first offender many many times; first in a "boys' home," later in a "youth center," then in a reformatory and finally in a penitentiary—sometimes with only a few months in between each step up (or down) the correctional ladder. It is not uncommon for one offender alone to cost society $100,000 in obvious costs and an incalculable amount in hidden costs over the span of his prison career.

The Prison as a Specialized Learning Center

In the United States the institution to which a sentenced offender is sent is generally determined by his age, the nature of his crime, proximity to the legal jurisdiction of his offense or his home location. His education and training needs almost never are the basis for his assignment to a particular state or Federal prison. Characteristically, therefore, if an institution is seeking to provide education and training services to its particular resident population it has the almost insurmountable task of providing a universal range of education and training opportunities. The required range of education and training programs is not necessarily smaller in an institution housing 200 prisoners than it would be in one housing 2,000. The need for services will depend *less* on the number of prisoners than on their age, educational attainment level when committed to prison, and their individual aptitudes, experiences, backgrounds, and interests. A relatively small prison housing 200 prisoners may require as wide a range of programs as one housing 2,000.

It is quite possible that the smaller the prison, the less able it will be to provide required programs, particularly from a cost effective standpoint. Under these circumstances, it becomes increasingly necessary to group prison populations by education and training requirements (all other factors being equal). One correctional facility could serve as a paramedical training center offering training in such high demand occupations as medical technicians and medical administrators. Proximity to a good hospital is important in such training programs and this would be possible under the centralized training center concept.

Another prison might specialize in training for human service occupations sending forth credentialled occupational counselors, teachers, teacher-aides, and educational administrators. Regional specialized prisons could serve several states and coeducational populations. The combinations which could be developed to provide the much needed education and training services are limitless, depending only on the willingness and ability of managers and governmental jurisdictions to cooperate.

It is critical to remember when considering this approach that it is not as desirable as community-based programming and only makes economic and social sense when other delivery systems are not feasible.

Educational Technology Centers

Where it is not possible to centralize or specialize education and training programs, educational technology now makes it possible for us to provide a much wider range of educational and training offerings in the individual "all purpose" institution. Computer assisted instruction, dial access video-tape systems, and programmed materials packaged and delivered in a variety of ways are now available to the correctional education program manager. While some of these systems appear to be relatively expensive, closer examination suggests that unit costs, amortized over reasonable periods of time, are lower than appear at first glance.

The use of educational equipment rather than live instruction makes possible not only a wider range of course offerings but also permits a greater degree of flexibility in scheduling student involvement. As a result, education programming can be more compatible with other institutional requirements.

Increased use of educational technology permits education staff to become program managers and educational counselors rather than talking textbooks before drowsy students. One important pitfall to avoid in these kinds of programs is overassignment to machine education. It is important to maintain a balance between machine or programmed material and managed group discussions, involvement with "tutors," or other people-to-people contacts by students. It is apparently easy to forget that education and training are not limited to the mastery of information or skills, but rather embrace learning to live with and relate to people in mutually enhancing ways.

Dieuzeide (1970) summarized the purposes of

educational technology as ". . . the systematic application of the resources of scientific knowledge to the process that *each individual* has to go through in order to acquire and use knowledge."

We need always to remember, particularly when working with troubled people, that the human encounter is one of our important educational resources.

Establishment of Correctional School Districts

Several states, such as Texas, Connecticut, and Illinois, have created statewide school districts which embrace correctional institutions in the state. This approach makes available budget, staff, materials and other resources normally provided to an operating school district in the state. Since many state correctional budgets make no provision for full-time teachers or other resources necessary to provide meaningful education programs, this new school district approach is very significant. In other states where correctional budgets include education funds, they must be fought for annually, and programs continually hover on the brink of disaster. The prison school district approach may offer some stability to these situations.

There are indications that other states are considering this approach and to the extent it represents a continuing commitment to education programs in prisons it is highly desirable. If as a result of becoming a school district, however, programs and procedures imitate public school systems and make inadequate allowance for the special education needs of prison populations, they will not accomplish the high goals envisioned for this approach. In addition, if the educational services are provided primarily *inside* the institutions and ignore study-release and other alternatives, these new school districts will be going against the tide and will reduce the chances for new community-based models to emerge. It remains to be seen if the states embracing the school district concept will have the courage and the foresight to provide educational services outside the walls for appropriate individuals

Educational Diagnostic and Referral Centers

Many correctional administrators are eager to tell visitors to prisons that a large percentage of the people in prison do not really belong there. If this is true there is a real need for more residential correctional facilities in which security is the last rather than the first priority. Such a center could serve as an education and training, reception, diagnostic, and referral institution. The "students" would continue to be under the supervision of state or Federal authorities, but the primary goal of the institution would be to provide education and training diagnosis (testing), and prescriptive programming. It would also address location of appropriate education and training institutions, tuition and related financial support for "students," and if necessary intensive educational counseling and related services.

The kinds of people recruited to staff these correctional centers would be quite different from the kinds of people attracted to institutional work where the primary goal is security and/or maintenance of the institution. These institutions might be located near or could even be part of community college systems. Their primary purpose would be diagnosis and appropriate referral and provision of services necessary to bring the individual up to a level of readiness for education and training programming. Basic literacy as well as industrial literacy programs might be offered on-site, but beyond that level the individual would be referred to an already existing education or training opportunity. The institution could be residential or nonresidential depending on circumstances.

Use of Community Colleges

The nationwide chain of 1,100 community colleges offers another possible resource for relocating and redirecting correctional education efforts. Mensel (1972) has suggested that community colleges can serve as diagnostic and testing centers, developers of program plans for individual offenders, and effective referral agents to other community counseling, occupational, or educational institutions. The American Association of Junior Colleges has indicated an interest in seeking out jurisdictions which might be willing to use community and junior colleges as precommitment diversionary centers. These colleges could serve as facilitators in the delivery of any services necessary to divert the first offender from commitment to a correctional institution.

Whether or not this concept can be implemented will depend to a large extent not only on the reaction of the professionals in the criminal justice and community and junior college systems, but also on the reaction of parents, students, and the public at large.

Conclusion

We need to start asking fundamental questions with respect to correctional education and training programs. The basic issue is: Do we agree that present systems are inadequate? If our answer to this important question is yes, we can then assemble some of the best theoreticians and practitioners in corrections and education to evolve new delivery systems. The broad conceptual models discussed in this paper are but a few of perhaps an unlimited number of combinations which could be developed.

The unanswered question is, of course, are the public and its elected representatives ready to encourage correctional administrators to test the water?

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